

# Popcorn Wagon

Second chances in life are often hard to come by so the city of Columbus knew it was a good idea to get back a piece of its history, the popcorn wagon, when it had the chance. George Hasey bought the wagon right off the assembly line in Chicago in 1928. He sold his wares on the four-corners in downtown Columbus for more than 50 years. In 1979, George's health started to fail and the popcorn wagon was auctioned off. He died a year later.

John Robinson was the high bidder at the auction and decided to put the wagon on display in a casino in Virginia City, Nevada. It was later purchased by Eddie Bullard, who moved it to Placerville, California. For 20 years, people from Columbus offered to buy back the wagon with no luck. On a whim, Kim Schleicher decided to call Bullard. As luck would have it, the wagon had been put up for sale just two days earlier! The citizens of Columbus held a series of public informational meetings to decide how to proceed. They decided that a for-profit corporation, Columbus Popcorn Wagon, Inc., should be set up in order to raise the \$50,000 needed. Shares were sold for \$100 each. The plan was



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to offer the stocks until December 31, 1997. As December approached, the group found they still needed to sell quite a few shares. The situation looked grim, but an anonymous source stepped forward to purchase the remaining 3,800 shares.

The George Hasey popcorn wagon was finally returned to Columbus. It was unveiled on May 16, 1998, during Columbus' Red Bud Festival, and is once again making popcorn and memories for the citizens of Columbus.

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For more information, call the Wisconsin Main Street Program at (608) 266-7531.

